

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

ASSISTANT SECRETARY

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April 27, 1964

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MEMORANDUM FOR MR. JOHN McCONE
Central Intelligence Agency

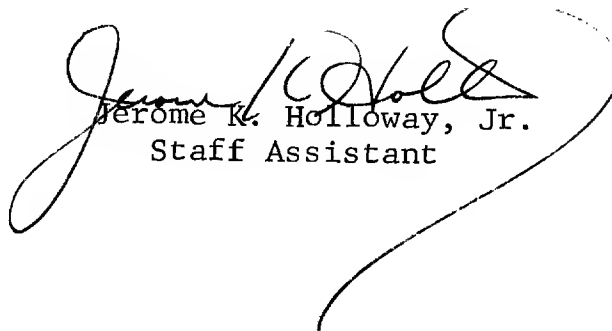
The Secretary has asked that you receive a copy of the enclosed memorandum of conversation between Ambassador Bohlen and Louis Joxe. The covering note from Assistant Secretary Tyler says:

"Chip sent me attached by letter.
There should be no distribution.

"You may remember Joxe, who is a personal friend of mine, and is now Minister of State. He is non-political and serves de Gaulle without being a Gaullist.

"I attach great credence to his views.

"If you would like anyone else to see this, would you just jot down their names on the memo itself?"


Jerome K. Holloway, Jr.
Staff Assistant

Attachment:

Memo of conversation
dated April 21, 1964.

JKH:mt

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
ASSISTANT SECRETARY

4/25/64

Mr Secretary,

Chip sent me attached by letter.
There should be no inhibition.

You may remember Toxe, who
is a personal friend of mine, and
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Bill

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Participants: M. Louis Joxe
Mr. Joseph Alsop
Ambassador Charles E. Bohlen

Date and Place: American Embassy Residence
Dinner, April 21, 1964

After dinner at the Residence the following conversation took place between M. Louis Joxe, Mr. Joseph Alsop, and myself:

French Recognition of Communist China.

Alsop stated to Joxe that he had never been able to see any direct French interest which was served by the French recognition of Communist China and asked Joxe if he would tell him on a completely confidential and personal basis what he thought the purpose had been.

Joxe replied that the recognition of Communist China was not a new thought to General de Gaulle; that very shortly after he took over power in May 1958 he had asked Joxe what he thought of the idea of France's recognizing Communist China. Joxe had definitely given him a negative reaction, pointing out that it would have a very bad effect on his relations with the United States and that he saw no advantage to France in proceeding with this step given the situation in the Far East. De Gaulle had agreed not to pursue the matter at that time.

Joxe said that it was always necessary in discussing de Gaulle and his motivations for any action to separate his "method of analysis" and his "conclusions". He realized that no American would agree with de Gaulle's conclusions, but he thought it might be helpful if they understood his method of analysis. In the first place it was important to be aware that de Gaulle had little understanding of the realities of the external world. He was purely a proponent of France and French circumstances and regarded everything through the prism of French mentality. In the case of the Far East he undoubtedly thought that he was moving further

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ahead than others and was taking a step which sooner or later all other countries, including the United States, would have to take.

In reply to my specific question as to whether the timing of recognition early this year had not been effected by de Gaulle's analysis of the Indochinese situation, Joxe expressed very definite agreement. He said he thought de Gaulle was convinced for a variety of reasons (and here Joxe indicated that France's experience made it difficult for him to conceive of success by the United States) that the current American policy in Vietnam was doomed to failure and he wished to be installed in Peking in anticipation of the time when there would be some serious negotiations with the Chinese. He said de Gaulle had the distinct view that no question in the peripheral area to the south of China can be settled without the agreement of that country. He also felt that it was important to be in a position to be able to discuss matters directly with the Chinese Communists. Joxe said that he felt that there was no more to the recognition of China than this generalized view of de Gaulle on the situation in the Orient. He had no understanding, Joxe felt, of the interrelation of the various factors in the Far East and seemed to be completely ignorant of the possible consequences of the support of neutralization in Indochina on other countries in the area.

Joxe then said he thought it was very important that our two countries should seek to find subjects on which they could agree rather than stressing the ones on which they disagree. I pointed out it was not easy to find the subject on which there would be full agreement -- this was certainly not true on Indochina, nor on NATO, nor on the organization of Europe. Joxe agreed, adding the subject of nuclear policy, but felt there should be something that we could concentrate on which would offer this possibility.

I told him that on other subjects, such as most African questions, we worked very well together, but that unfortunately it was and would be the disagreements that would get the headlines. I told him my concern was that as public opinion in the United States got the impression that France was no longer a "friendly" country it would cause great difficulty to American diplomacy. I said I had been very much encouraged by the calm attitude of the people in the

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Executive Branch of the United States Government.

Alsop, who had remained silent during most of Joxe's exposé then said that in his opinion the United States would carry the war to the north and even use the atomic bomb if necessary. He said it was his view that if we permitted Vietnam to be overrun by the Communists the United States would cease to be an Asiatic power and there would be a radical shift in Japanese policy which would be followed by Formosa, the Philippines, Thailand, etc.

Joxe expressed some surprise at this statement and inquired if we were prepared to take on China since he was certain that China would not stand by and see VietMinh crushed by the United States.

Alsop rather pooh-poohed China, saying it has no military power and no bomb and therefore is not in a position to do anything. When I mentioned that they had done a considerable amount in Korea through the use of manpower and our Air Force had been relatively ineffective, Alsop dismissed Korea saying we did not understand the nature of the problem then but felt at present our military were much more alert. Both Joxe and I expressed serious doubt as to the possibility mentioned by Alsop, but he persisted in his view.

Alsop also stated that he felt de Gaulle was animated primarily by animosity towards the United States and that this was the real explanation of his recognition of Communist China. Joxe disagreed, and stated that de Gaulle was not primarily motivated by any feeling in regard to the United States but that he would not be deterred from an action which he was taking for other reasons simply because it was not pleasing to the United States. He admitted that from an American point of view it would look as though it was the United States, but if you understood de Gaulle's psychology you would realize that this was a matter of a certain amount of indifference to it. He did admit, however, that de Gaulle always seemed to pass slights or even imaginary slights. He said that in effect de Gaulle was animated by determination not to have the French dependent on any other country.

De Gaulle's Health.

Joxe said during the conversation that de Gaulle had very successfully supported the operation and that he would be out and

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
back on the job within ten days or so. He said, however, that the next six months would tell the story. It was conceivable that de Gaulle would make a complete recovery and be unaffected by the operation. On the other hand in such cases it was not unusual that the removal of a prostate gland might lead to a considerable diminution of energy and inability to support the arduous schedule necessary for the President of the French Republic.

He said there was one thing he knew for a fact to be true about de Gaulle's character and that was his absolute conviction that if you were not physically able to support the requirements of the job you must give up the job. He repeated therefore that he thought the next six months would be decisive for de Gaulle's future. He said six months would be about the time required to make this test.

In the event that de Gaulle could not carry on Joxe was certain that there was no "dauphin" designated. He was also reasonably certain that France would not revert to the old system of Parliamentary rule. He did not however speculate on who might be a possible successor to de Gaulle.

After the conversation when we had joined the ladies Joxe said to me that he had been glad to have the opportunity to speak with Alsop and while he found him a little "belliciste" he did not take too seriously what Alsop had said.

I mentioned very briefly to Joxe Alphand's view that France might support us in the event we extended the war, to which he at first expressed surprise and later said this might be possible but had no certain knowledge of it since it was a matter which had never been discussed in the Cabinet.


AmbCEBohlen:am
April 22, 1964

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